

AROUND THE HEAP.

J. W. BENGOUGH.

A most admirable book, one well worth a careful reading, is "The Expansion of Religion," by Rev. E. Winchester Donald of Boston. We cordially recommend it to the more thoughtful patrons of our city library. Mr. Donald is manifestly a scholar and a thinker, but like many others who might be so described, he seems to be quite in the dark when it comes to a treatment of the labor question. He conceives that question to be a threefold complaint lodged by labor against civilization, viz., 1, that wages are too low; 2, that the hours of work are too long, and, 3, that the product is not equitably distributed. We are not so much concerned just now with his treatment of the first two charges, though as to the first, we may remark in passing, that he thinks that the real question is, "how much can the fund out of which all wages are paid, devote to the compensation of labor without exhausting itself, without falling to receive the increase necessary to preserve it as a fund from which wages can be paid?" This candid confession of his faith in the exploded wage fund theory prepares us for some eccentricities of thought, when he comes to the third branch of the subject—the matter of inequitable distribution. This is in reality the heart of the labor question. To solve the difficulty Mr. Donald thinks it "ought first to be ascertained how much of all that is produced by the only three producers known to political economy—land, capital and labor—is directly due to labor."

This we regard as a hopeful start. It is a reasonable proposition. But what delights and surprises us so much is to find the rev. gentleman apparently oblivious to there being but "three producers known to political economy—land, capital and labor." It is, of course, hardly accurate to call land a "producer;" we prefer Mr. George's phrase—"the passive factor in production." But that is another story. Mr. Donald evidently holds the belief that labor and capital, the two active human factors, having access to land, the passive factor, produce all the wealth of which political economy takes cognizance. This is entirely orthodox, and we feel disposed to cheer the advent of another writer who can find no place for landlordism amongst the forces of production, either active or passive. And our delight in this new recruit to the cause of sound political economy increases as we go on to read: "Suppose we imagine the total production of the United States to be heaped up on one of our western prairies in the shape of commodities. It would be a vast and complex pile. Every article known to the arts and sciences would be there. Food, clothing, drugs, implements, machinery, furniture, books, pictures, architects' drawings. To produce them there had to be land, capital and labor. Each of these three is unproductive without the other in an industrial sense. Each is clamoring for the largest share of this heap of commodities." Let us stop just here for a moment. It is a striking illustration, and clears the way, one would think, for a satisfactory solution of the question at issue—that of a just distribution. Contemplating that heap of commodities, Mr. Henry George may be supposed to address our author. He says: "Dear Mr. Donald, the thing seems to me simple enough. The three human parties who have just claims to shares are, 1, labor; 2, capital; 3, the community, representing the factor you call land. Now the first thing to be done is to deduct from this pile of goods a quantity equal in value to the annual rental value of the land upon which they were produced, that is to say, a fair ground rent, after allowing for all improvements in the way of buildings, drainage, etc. We thus arrive at the value which the land has obtained by reason of the presence of the community. In other words, the value the community as such has created. This, of course, justly belongs to the creator. Having, then, paid off the community, or the land factor, we have labor and capital left to deal with, and between them is to be apportioned all that remains of the heap of goods. If the settlement is to be made between them in

terms of wages, how much of the heap shall labor have as wages? Well, say the heap represents the production of a year—305 days let us call it. Labor is supposed to have been working for capital. His pay shall therefore be little more than he could have made had he chosen to employ himself, as free access to the land would have enabled him to do, for no man will work for another for the same or less than he could make working for himself. Having then arrived at a decision as to the possible daily production of labor, we multiply it by 305, and thus have his yearly production. We find that this amount is just equivalent to all that is left of the heap. Labor, in alliance with land, has in short produced the entire amount of goods, and since land's share has already been handed over to the community, all that remains belongs to labor. But where, then, does capital come in? What is capital? Labor's ally and assistant. Labor is the natural power of man to sow seed and gather in the harvest. For example, capital is the artificial assistance rendered by the seed drill and the reaping machine. Capital is, in fact, but another sort of labor, and is justly entitled to share the extra production it makes possible. Labor and capital are not worker and boss, much less natural enemies, they are partners, therefore what is left of the heap may be equitably divided in either of two ways: 1, in the equivalent to labor of fair wages for 305 days work, or in the payment to capital of an equivalent of an interest on the loan of his assisting machinery."

What does Mr. Donald say to this? Being a reasonable and honest man we are inclined to think he would accept it as a just settlement. But in the absence of Mr. George, he has floundered, we regret to say. Listen to him:

"Round this supposed heap of commodities are gathered the producers of it, each strenuous to maintain his claim to the biggest share, each resting his claim on his biggest contribution in its production.

... For, it is absolutely essential that each of three producing forces shall be maintained in its efficiency as a producer. The integrity of each of our three producers is economically imperative."

... three producers—land, labor and capital. Now, it becomes clear that our author is not speaking of land as a passive factor, but as a human force entitled to demand its share along with labor and capital.

In short, he means landlordism, and it is needless to say that any scholar, whatever his good intentions, whatever his piety, who endorses landlordism, who defends the justice and righteousness of the speculative ownership of the earth by individuals, will flounder in vain to find a solution of the labor question. With this freebooting element omitted from the respectable society of producers, with the share which now goes into the pocket of landlordism paid over to the state—in lieu of all taxes now levied, the distribution of the product equitably between labor and capital is a matter easily within reach of practical politics, if it is not, indeed, a thing which would settle itself by natural law.

PERSONALTY TAXATION.

The Municipal Committee of the Single Tax Club at the last meeting presented a report of the recent proceedings of the Revision Court, in which particular attention was called to the great number of protests of citizens against the imposition of taxes on personalty. The committee expressed the opinion that this feature of our tax system was in every respect obnoxious. In the attempt to reach the owners of personalty much fraud and perjury resulted, and the effect was to bring the law into contempt, besides burdening trade quite unnecessarily, and the tax could reasonably be abolished. Instances were cited of business men forced to leave the city owing to the high tax levied. The committee thought the city should endeavor to relieve some of the burdens placed on the productive factors, labor and capital, instead of attempting to tax everything in sight.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

A decisive vote was taken in the New South Wales Parliament on October 18, 1892.

It had become daily more evident that radical action on the land question in New South Wales could not be much longer delayed, and with the design of testing the feeling of the House, a supporter of the Government (Mr. C. Hopman) introduced a resolution declaring for a progressive tax holdings over 11,000 in value. This was opposed by Mr. Cotton (Single Taxer), who moved the following amendment: "That in the opinion of this House a system of raising revenue by direct taxation of land values, irrespective of improvements, would greatly promote the welfare of this country."

The Premier, Sir George Dibbs, voted for the amendment, and stated that the Government intended to press the Local Government Bill, which authorizes municipalities to raise their revenues by a tax on land values without reference to the improvements on land.

On division, Mr. Cotton's amendment was adopted in place of the original resolution by a vote of 40 to 13. Both the leader of the Government and the Opposition voted for it.

Progress does not stop here, for we hear that the new tax law, passed by both Houses of the Legislature without division, December 6th, 1892, is the nearest approach yet made to the Single Tax. The taxation of improvements on land and of personal property is entirely discarded, land values being taxed at the rate of a penny in the pound. Land to the value of £240 is exempt from taxation. The bill provides for a stiff income tax on all incomes exceeding £425 per year. Where land is mortgaged the owner is permitted to deduct from his tax bill the amount of interest paid annually on his mortgage. The holder of the mortgage is caught by the income tax. Custom duties are greatly reduced and provision made on the Queensland plan for a continuous reduction until 1901, when the tariff will be practically abolished. The country is in a terrible condition financially, and thousands of its people have been on the verge of starvation for months past. Heroic measures became necessary, and the example of New Zealand was not lost on the statesmen of New South Wales.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN TASMANIA.

The Leemore (Cal.) Radical for October 13, says:

In Tasmania, one of the Australian colonies, proportional representation on the preferential plan, has been enacted into law, to apply at the next election of members of Parliament elected from the two principal cities of Tasmania. Six members are elected from one city and four from another. This far off and hitherto very conservative English colony has taken a step in advance of the entire world. South Australia is likely to follow next, and in New Zealand it is to be a leading question in the coming campaign. The action of Tasmania was entirely unexpected.

California is now behind. The example of the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute, and seven other organized bodies there, has demonstrated that the system is practical. To the earnest efforts of a few real reformers there is the work in Tasmania indirectly in part due. Miss Catharine H. Spence of South Australia has labored for years to see the day now dawning—the day of real representative government.

Alfred Cridge, father of the editor of The Radical, who has labored heart and soul for 20 years for proportional representation, in the evening of a long and useful life, sees the result of his work extending throughout the English-speaking world.

Soon the Australian system of representation will be as vigorously pushed in the United States as was the Australian ballot.

Greeting to our brothers beneath the Southern Cross. In the words of Lowell: "For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears along

Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right or wrong;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet humanity's vast frame,
Through its ocean-sundered fibres, feels the gush of joy or shame,
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest

WILD BEASTS IN INDIA.

From an Indian official report it is learned that in the year 1895, 2893 persons lost their lives through tigers, panthers, bears, elephants and other wild beasts; 21,538 died from serpent bites, three-fourths of which were caused by cobras. Quite 97,000 domestic animals were killed by tigers, panthers and serpents.